DR.T. SUBBARAMI REDDY: No, Sir. We want the Minister to answer this question tomorrow. *(Interruptions)*

**National Waterways Project**

*370. SHRI M.V. RAJASEKHARAN: Will the Minister of SHIPPING be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government propose to launch National Waterways Project throughout the country;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether it is a fact that the National Waterwsays Development Council, Madurai has submitted a proposal pertaining to the National Waterways Project;

(d) if so, the salient features of the proposal; and

(e) the action taken by Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF SHIPPING (SHRI VEDPRAKASH P. GOYAL): (a) to (e) A statement is laid on the Table of the House.

**Statement**

(a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

(c) and (d) National Waterways Development Council (NWDC), Madurai submitted a proposal titled 'National Waterways Project'. This project envisages construction of three artificial big canals namely, Himalayan Canal (4500 Kms. long), Central Canal (5750 Kms. long) and Sourthern Canal (4650 Kms. long). Width of these canals is proposed as 120 metres and minimum depth of water as 10 metres. Cost of the project was indicated as Rs. 4,00,000 crores. This project is of the nature of multipurpose water resource project covering irrigation, flood control, generation of power and navigation. The main advantage of the project so far as Ministry of Shipping is concerned is that inland vessels can ply on these canals.

(e) This is a multipurpose water resources project covering irrigation, flood control generation of power, navigation etc. A national perspective plan for inter-linking of rivers by which water can be transferred from water

surplus basins to water deficit areas has already been prepared by the Ministry of Water Resources. Since the inter-linking of rivers is intended to address the multi-purpose uses of water resources, a further waterways project may not be necessary.

SHRI M.V. RAJASEKHARAN: Sir, when the hon. Members in this House put the question, that envisages that the Member would like to know the thinking of the Government, as well as the specific action being taken by them. Sir, I have been seeing in this House, particularly, the concerned Ministries, giving very evasive answers. One of the reasons why we would take interest to put these questions is that we would like to know how the Government is dealing with this problem. Sir, as far as the National Waterways connectivity is concerned, we have been reading in the newspapers the statement of the Prime Minister. Here, in reply to this question, the Minister says 'no'. Sir, this is not a correct way of giving answers in this House. Secondly, now they agree that the National Waterways is going to help the country. Mr. Chairman, Sir, as you are aware, very often, the country is facing droughts and floods and the connectivity of the National Waterways is the only solution to this problem. Therefore, I would like to know what exactly the thinking of the Government in this connection is.

SHRI Su. THIRUNAVUKKARASAR: Hon. Chairman Sir, the main question was: whether the Government propose to launch National Waterways Project throughout the country. As it is , there is no proposal for launching a National Waterways Project. We have stated "no" in the reply. Sir, linking of rivers comes under the Ministry of Water Resources. Our Ministry does not deal with it; we deal with only Inland Waterways. We have already declared three waterways as National Waterways and a proposal for declaring a few other waterways as National Waterwayc is under the active consideration of the Government. But linking of rivers, as announced by the hon. Prime Minister, is dealt with by the Ministry of Water Resources, as I said. Even then, I can reply to the question put by the hon. Member. I would like to point out that a committee has already been constituted to look into the proposal of linking of rivers, at a cost of more than Rs. one lakh crores. The proposal is under the active consideration of the Government. This is being dealt with by the Ministry of Water Resources; not by this Ministry. As far as Inland Waterways is concerned we have already given a detailed reply.

SHRI M.V. RAJASEKHARAN: My second supplementary is: if that is so, when is the project going to be undertaken, what plan of action the Government is going to come up with; when is that plan of action going to be put through? My last supplementary is: as you are aware, there are lot of problems in the Northern and Southern regions of the country.

MR. CHAIRMAN: You have already put two supplementaries.

SHRI M.V. RAJASEKHARAN: There are floods in the North and drought conditions in the South. Also, there are problems in sharing the waters of the Cauvery river.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Will you kindly allow the Minister to reply?

SHRI M.V. RAJASEKHARAN: Alright, Sir. When is the Ministry going to link the Brahmaputra, the Ganga and the Cauvery rivers?

SHRI Su. THIRUNAVUKKARASAR: I have already replied to the question of the hon. Member. I repeat, this question is related to the Ministry of Water Resources. This project is expected to be complete in ten years.

SHRI M.V. RAJASEKHARAN: But you have a collective responsibility, along with the Ministry of Water Resources. You cannot evade the question. You are not giving a definite answer.

SHRI Su. THIRUNAVUKKARASAR: I agree that collective responsibility is there. But you have to put the question to the Ministry of Water Resources. Even then, I shall give a definite reply. As the directions of the Supreme Court, a committee has been constituted for linking the rivers. The project cost, as announced is nearly Rs. one lakh crores. The period will be ten years. The high-level committee will look into all these aspects and thereafter the Government will decide on that matter. I would again say that this comes under the purview of the Ministry of Water Resources. We deal only with Inland Waterways.

DR. FAROOQ ABDULLAH: Sir, according to the Indus Water Treaty, which has been the bone of contention, as far as my State is concerned, three rivers in my State have completely been given to Pakistan. I would like to know from the hon. Minister of Inland Waterways, whether we are thinking of relinking these rivers—when you are thinking of linking the

northern rivers with the southern rivers—the Sindh, the Jhelum and the Chenab, with those rivers.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The question is out of scope. I have allowed it only because the Minister is speaking for the first time.

SHRI J. CHITHARANJAN: Sir, during the last 12 years, amounts have been provided in the Budget for developing inland waterways, one of which is the waterways from Quilon or Kollam to Kodumgallore, there are certain others also. But even though amounts have been provided in the Budget, the works are not being taken up seriously; it is not progressing.

**Coverage of FM Radio**

*371. SHRI PRITHVIRAJ CHAVAN: Will the Minister of INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING be pleased to state:

(a) the total number of FM Radio Stations in the country;

(b) the percentage of population covered by these Stations;

(c) how many new FM Radio Stations are proposed to be started during the Tenth Plan, year-wise; and

(d) by when Government hope to achieve full coverage of FM Broadcast?

THE MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING (SHRIMATI SUSHMA SWARAJ): (a) to (d) A Statement is laid on the Table of the House:

**Statement**

(a) 133 FM Radio Stations of All India Radio are presently functioning in the country. AIR is also operating 6 FM Stations of Gyan Vani Channel of Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU). In addition, 10 private FM channels are also operational.

(b) 31.34% of population is covered by AIR FM Radio broadcast.

(c) 95 new FM stations (including replacement of 12 existing MW transmitters) and upgradation of 18 existing FM Stations of AIR are envisaged during the Tenth Five Year Plan.